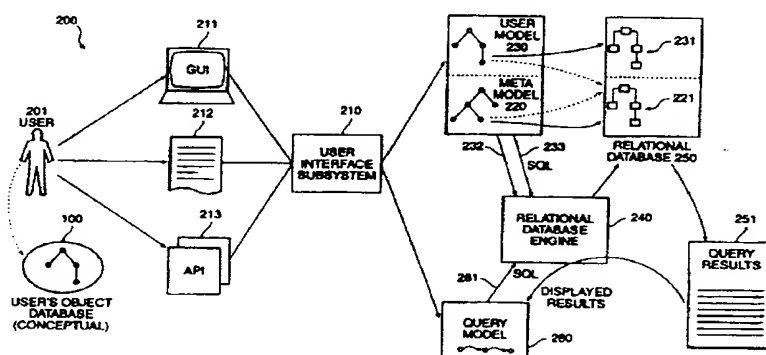




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(54) Title: MODELING OF OBJECT-ORIENTED DATABASE STRUCTURES, TRANSLATION TO RELATIONAL DATABASE STRUCTURES, AND DYNAMIC SEARCHES THEREON



(57) Abstract

A method and system for modeling of object-oriented database structures, translation to relational database structures, and dynamic searches thereon. The user may create, edit and manipulate a user's object database (dynamically translated into a set of relational database structures), to create, edit and manipulate objects for that object database (dynamically translated into data for those relational database structures), and to create, edit and manipulate queries to be applied to that object database (dynamically translated into queries to be applied to those relational database structures). A meta-model of the user's object database, which is itself an object database, and which has itself been translated into a set of relational database structures for manipulation by a relational database engine. The meta-model comprises a set of classes, objects, and relationships between classes which model the classes and relationships between classes of the system. Each of these classes may comprise a set of searchable properties, and each of these relationships may comprise an inheritance relationship (between a base class and a derived class) or a data-model relationship (such as a one-to-one, one-to-many, or many-to-many relationship). The data model of the user's object database is modeled by actual objects in the meta-model, and editing or manipulating the user's object database is modeled by creating, modifying, or deleting objects in the meta-model. The meta-model also models itself, in the same manner as it models the user's object database, and may be manipulated in the same manner as the user's object database.

Title of the Invention

Modeling of Object-Oriented Database Structures, Translation to Relational Database Structures,
and Dynamic Searches Thereon

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Background of the Invention

1. *Field of the Invention*

This invention relates to modeling of object-oriented database structures, translation to relational database structures, and dynamic searches thereon.

10 2. *Description of Related Art*

In the design of computer software systems, it is considered superior to associate each data item with a data type, and to present a relatively uniform interface to objects of each data type to all elements of the system. This technique allows elements of the system to rely on the characteristics of the data type, of the uniform interface to that data type, and of the relationships
15 between that data type and other data types. In addition to so-called "built in" data types, such as integers and floating point numbers, it is also superior to extend this technique to more complex data types, sometimes called "classes," including classes defined by a user of the system. (For example, a user might define a class called telephone number and thus allow elements of the system to store, manipulate, or retrieve telephone numbers as if they were fundamental pieces of information.)
20 Techniques of defining classes of software objects and restricting access to those objects are now common with some programming languages, such as the C++ and Smalltalk programming languages, called object-oriented programming languages ("OOPL").

Recently it has been found that the technique of defining classes of software objects
25 and manipulating those objects has been useful for database applications as well. In object-oriented database ("OODB") applications, a user defines classes of objects, properties of those classes, and relationships between those classes, and populates a database with data items which are instances of

tional database structure for persistent storage of objects, it is generally inadequate to the other tasks demanded of a database application, including dynamically modifying the object hierarchy and object relationships, populating the database, dynamically populating and editing the objects in the database, and dynamically generating and performing searches against the database.

5

The following patents are examples of the art:

- 10 o U.S. Patent 5,398,336, "Object-Oriented Architecture for Factory Floor Management", issued March 14, 1995, in the name of inventors Subhash B. Tantry, et al., and assigned to Consilium, Inc.
- 15 o U.S. Patent 5,212,787, "Method and Apparatus for Accessing A Relational Database Without Exiting An Object-Oriented Environment", issued May 18, 1993, in the name of inventors Ronald B. Baker, et al., and assigned to International Business Machines Corporation.
- 20 o U.S. Patent 5,201,046, "Relational Database Management System and Method for Storing, Retrieving and Modifying Directed Graph Data Structures", issued April 6, 1993, in the name of inventors Robert N. Goldberg, et al., and assigned to Xidak, Inc.
- 25 o U.S. Patent 5,181,162, "Document Management and Production System", issued January 19, 1993, in the name of inventors Robert M. Smith, et al., and assigned to Eastman Kodak Company.
- 30 o U.S. Patent 5,161,225, "Persistent Stream for Processing Time Consuming and Reusable Queries in An Object Oriented Database Management System", issued November 3, 1992, in the name of inventors Robert L. Abraham, et al., and assigned to International Business Machines Corporation.
- o U.S. Patent 5,133,075, "Method of Monitoring Changes in Attribute Values of Objects in An Object-Oriented Database", issued July 21, 1992, in the name of inventor Tore J.M. Risch, and assigned to Hewlett-Packard Company.

ner as it models the user's object database, and may be manipulated in the same manner as the user's object database.

5 In a preferred embodiment, each class in the user's object database is modeled by a relational database table, each searchable property of that class is modeled by a column in that table, and each object of that class is modeled by a row in that table and corresponding rows in tables representing base classes for that object. Each such table comprises an "object-ID" column generated by the system, comprising a unique ID for each object in the system. Each relationship between two objects is modeled by providing a pointer from the first object to the second object; the pointer
10 comprises a column (generated by the system to model the relationship) in the first object's table with the object-ID of the second object. These relational database structures are created, modified, or deleted dynamically or incrementally in response to user commands to create, edit, and manipulate the user's object database.

15 At least two types of relationship are modeled by the system, inheritance relationships and data-model relationships. An inheritance relationship exists between a base class and a derived class. An object member of the derived class is entered in both the table for the base class and the table for the derived class, and it is given the same object-ID in both tables. The inheritance relationship between the two classes is modeled by a relational database JOIN between the two tables on the "object-ID" column. For multiple inheritance, an object with the same object-ID is entered in the derived class and in each of the multiple base classes.
20

A data-model relationship is created by the user for the user's object database, and may comprise a one-to-one, many-to-one, or many-to-many relationship. One-to-one and many-to-one relationships are modeled by providing a pointer from the first object to the second object.
25 Many-to-many relationships are modeled by providing a cross-link class, implemented using a table having one column for the first class having the object-ID of the first object in the many-to-many relationship, one column for the second class having the object-ID of the second object in the many-to-many relationship, and having one row for each pair of actually related objects. One-to-one and many-to-one relationships are modeled by a relational database JOIN between the two corresponding tables on the column modeling the data-model relationship; many-to-many relationships
30

Figure 3 shows a data model diagram of a meta-model for modeling the user's object database.

Figure 4 shows a data model diagram of a set of classes for modeling access control for the user's object database.

Figure 5 shows a data model diagram of a set of classes for modeling predefined graphical information display for the user's object database.

Figure 6 shows a flow diagram of a process for building and editing a data model of the user's object database.

Figure 7 shows a flow diagram of a process for translation between object-oriented and relational database structures.

Figure 8 shows a data model diagram of a user relational database corresponding to the sample user's object database of figure 1.

Figure 9 refers collectively to figure 9A and figure 9B. Figure 9A shows a flow diagram of a process for cascade searching of an object database and search translation between object-oriented and relational database structures. Figure 9B shows a block diagram of data structures used in the process for cascade searching.

Description of the Preferred Embodiment

In the following description, a preferred embodiment of the invention is described with regard to preferred process steps, data structures, and user interface. However, those skilled in the art would recognize, after perusal of this application, that embodiments of the invention may be implemented using a general purpose computer, or a set of general purpose computers, operating under program control, and that modification of a general purpose computer, or a set of general purpose computers, to implement the process steps, data structures, and user interface described herein would not require either invention or undue experimentation.

memory and therefore also of the class 101 component, so each object of the class 101 static memory has "name" and "size" as searchable properties 102.

Another example class 101 is manufacturer. In this example, each object of the class 101 manufacturer has "name" and "city" as searchable properties 102. In this example, the class 101 manufacturer is a base class, from which the classes 101 domestic manufacturer and foreign manufacturer are derived. The class 101 foreign manufacturer also has a searchable property 102 "country".

In this example, the class 101 component has a data-model relationship 103 with the class 101 manufacturer. This relationship 103 is many-to-one; each object of the class 101 component has a related object of the class 101 manufacturer, while each object of the class 101 manufacturer has zero or more related objects of the class 101 component.

In addition to searchable properties 102, each object of a derived class 101 also inherits the relationships 103 of its base class 101. Thus, each object of the class 101 static memory inherits the relationships 103 of the class 101 memory, which inherits the relationships 103 of the class 101 component. One of the relationships 103 of the class 101 component is a relationship 103 with the class 101 manufacturer, so each static memory has a manufacturer. Similarly, each foreign manufacturer may make static memories, dynamic memories, and analog components.

Those skilled in the art would easily recognize, after perusal of this application, a large number of variants on this example user's object database, and the ready applicability of the methods and systems disclosed herein to such variants. Applicability of the methods and systems disclosed herein would not require either invention or undue experimentation.

SYSTEM FOR COMPILATION AND TRANSLATION

Figure 2 shows a block diagram of a system for modeling of object-oriented database structures and translation to relational database structures.

The functions provided by the GUI 211, the text description tool 212, and the API 213 are further described with regard to figure 6.

5 The meta-model 220 comprises an object database having as its objects the classes 101 in the user's object database 100, searchable properties 102 of those classes, and relationships 103 between those classes. The meta-model 220 is further described with regard to figure 3.

10 In a preferred embodiment, the relational database engine 240 comprises a standard relational database management tool, such as the "Oracle" product available from Oracle Corporation of Redwood Shores, California. In alternative embodiments, the relational database engine 240 may comprise a product which accepts relational database commands in the "SQL" database manipulation language, or another database manipulation language having similar descriptive and imperative power.

15 In a preferred embodiment, the relational database engine 240 comprises a client/server, multi-user, networked architecture which uses a multi-user relational database engine, so that (1) a plurality of users 201 may operate on the relational database 250 simultaneously, (2) requests may be processed by the relational database engine 240, from users 201 and from the system 200, in an interleaved manner, and (3) a plurality of users 201 and a plurality of copies of the system 200 may be distributed over a network coupled to a plurality of relational database engines 240.

Building the User Database

25 The user interface 210 receives commands and descriptions from the user 201 regarding the user's object database 100, and in response thereto, builds and edits the user database model 230. As the user database model 230 comprises a set of objects in the meta-model 220, the process of building and editing the user database model 230 simply comprises building and editing objects in the meta-model 220. These objects are maintained by the system 200 as persistent objects, so the user database model 230 is maintained as a persistent part of the meta-model 220 by the system 200.

30

The meta-model 220 itself is represented by a meta-model relational database 221, comprising a set of relational database tables, properties of those tables, columns within those ta-

The process for translation between object-oriented and relational database structures is further described with regard to figure 7.

5 Populating the User Database

The user interface 210 also receives commands and descriptions from the user 201 regarding populating objects for the user database model 230, corresponding to objects for the user's object database 100. In response thereto, the system 200 builds and edits data items for the user relational database 232, following the specifications in the user database model 230.

10

The system 200 translates the objects for the user database model 230 into a set of SQL commands 233 for inserting, modifying, or deleting rows in the tables of the user relational database 231. These SQL commands 233 are transmitted to the relational database engine 240, which creates and edits rows within those tables, specific values for the columns for those rows, and pointers from one table to a related table.

15

In a preferred embodiment, the user 201 may specify integrity checks for each class 101 in the user database model 230, such that when an object is added to the user relational database 231, the integrity check is performed and the object is assured to meet the integrity check. For example, in the example user's object database 100 shown in figure 1, the user 201 may specify that each object of class 101 component has one and only one associated object of class 101 manufacturer. In this example, the user 201 may specify this integrity check in the data-model relationship 103 between the class 101 component and the class 101 manufacturer.

20

25

Similarly, the user 201 may specify a set of enumerated values, or a range of values, as the only valid values for a searchable property 102. When the user 201 so specifies, the system 200 creates an object, as further described herein with reference to figure 3, describing the valid set of enumerated values or the valid range of values, and associates that object with the searchable property 102.

30

In a preferred embodiment, the user interface 210 provides the user 201 with a command to show the valid set of enumerated values or the valid range of values for a searchable

In a preferred embodiment, the triggering event for translation of the query model 260 comprises a command by the user 201 to the GUI 211, by a text command to the text description tool 212, or by a program invoked by the user 201 to the API 213, to create the query results 251. The query model 260 also comprises descriptive information regarding presenting the results of the query to the user 201, which is incorporated by the system 200 into the SQL commands 261 for the query.

The process for creation of the query model 260 and translation of the query model 260 into a relational database query is further described with regard to figure 9.

META-MODEL FOR MODELING THE USER'S OBJECT DATABASE

Figure 3 shows a data model diagram of a meta-model for modeling the user's object database.

The meta-model 220 comprises a set of classes 101, a set of searchable properties 102 for each class 101, and a set of relationships 103 between classes 101, thus forming a system object database for recording information about the user's object database 100.

In figure 3, each box represents a class 101 and each line between boxes represents a relationship 103 between classes 101.

At junctions between classes 101 and relationships 103, symbols represent whether the relationship 103 couples zero, one, or more than one, objects of that class 101. A symbol has two symbol parts; a circular symbol part indicates zero objects, a single line symbol part indicates one object, and a forked line symbol part indicates more than one object. Thus a single symbol may indicate, for example, that each object in a first class 101 corresponds to one or more objects in a second class 101.

A shaded box represents a cross-link class 101, whose purpose is to provide for a many-to-many relationship between objects. Each such class 101 has two or more relationships

	user-specified function
External Access Function Operation	
	function which calls on the operating system
Formula	algebraic formula
5 Configuration	description of how an object is displayed, such as a configuration for editing an object
Search Panel Configuration	
	configuration for a search
Results Panel Configuration	
10	configuration for displaying search results

The user's object database 100 comprises a set of classes 101. In the meta-model 220, each class of the user's object database 100 is modeled by an object of class Class 301.

15 In a preferred embodiment, each object of class Class 301 comprises information in table 3-2.

Table 3-2

	<u>Property</u>	<u>Description</u>
20	Object ID	unique ID for this object
	Class Label	name to be displayed for the class
	Class DB Name	unique name for the class to be used in the user relational database
25	Class Group	indicates whether the class is part of the meta-model, a pre-defined class provided by the system, such as for graphics or permissions, or a user class
	Class Type	indicates whether the class is part of the meta-model, a cross-link class, a base class created for the sole purpose of grouping derived classes under a single "folder" name, or any other class created by the user
30	Is System Specific	TRUE if this class is part of the system
	Number of Objects	number of objects currently in this class

The properties 102 "Pending Operation" and "Action" maintain information about the status of the class 101 with regard to its representation in the relational database 250. If there is more than one user 201 simultaneously using the system 200 (this is the preferable operation of the system 200), it may occur that more than one user 201 attempts to simultaneously modify the same class 101. The system 200 uses these properties 102 to assure that such attempts do not cause any class 101 to enter an inconsistent state. Those skilled in the art of database systems will recognize that there are many known techniques for maintaining database integrity despite simultaneous updates of a database system, and will recognize, after perusal of this application, that application of such techniques to the system 200 would not require either invention or undue experimentation.

Parent/Child Classes

In the user's object database 100, each class comprises zero or more parent classes (base classes from which that class is derived), and zero or more child classes (derived classes for which that class is a base class). In the meta-model 220, each object of class Class 301 may have zero or more parent objects of class Class 301, and may have zero or more child objects of class Class 301. These many-to-many parent/child class relationships 103 are represented using a cross-link class Class Link 302.

Each object in the class Class Link 302 links a child class 101 to a parent class 101. A child class 101 may have more than one parent class 101 due to multiple inheritance.

In a preferred embodiment, each object of class Class Link 302 comprises information in table 3-3.

Table 3-3

<u>Property</u>	<u>Description</u>
Object ID	unique ID for this object
Parent Class	object ID for parent class
Child Class	object ID for child class
Distributed DB Node	node in a distributed database for which this object is a link

ject of class Pointer Class Property 304 has a pointer to an object of the user-defined type; the pointer is an object of class Pointer Valid Class 305.

5 In a preferred embodiment, each object of class Pointer Class Property 304 comprises information in table 3-4.

Table 3-4

<u>Property</u>	<u>Description</u>
Object ID	unique ID for this object
10 Pointer Property Label	name to be displayed for the property
Pointer Property DB Name	unique name for the property to be used in the user relational database
Display Order	order this property is displayed relative to others within its class
15 Is Owned by Target	TRUE if this property inherits permission from the class it points to
Is Value Required	TRUE if value cannot be null
Is Column Indexed	TRUE if column for this property is indexed in the user relational database
20 Column Index Type	type of index in the relational database
Is Derived Externally	TRUE if generated by system
Relational Meaning	relational meaning of property in the user relational database, e.g., primary key, internal key, description
Configuration Info	indicates when this property is displayed: for searches, for search results, for both, or for neither
25 Insert Update Rule	rule to follow when inserting or updating new objects having this property, e.g., disallow updates if there are related objects, cascade update to any related objects, or set pointer to null on update of related objects
30 Delete Rule	rule to follow when deleting objects having this property, e.g., disallow deletion if there are related objects, cascade deletion to any related objects, set pointer to null on deletion

<u>Property</u>	<u>Description</u>
Object ID	unique ID for this object
Valid Class Description	description of the relation between the pointing and target classes, e.g., in " <u>part</u> is-manufactured-by <u>manufacturer</u> ", the Valid Class Description would be 'is-manufactured-by'

5

Each object of class Pointer Valid Class 305 links an object of class Pointer Class Property 304 to a target class 101.

10 Searchable Properties: Built-In Datatypes

The class Class Property 303 includes one object for each searchable property 102 for any object of type class having a built-in data type, and each object of class Class 301 may have zero or more associated objects of class Class Property 303. Each object of class Class Property 303 has a value.

15

In a preferred embodiment, each object of class Class Property 303 comprises information in table 3-6.

Table 3-6

20	<u>Property</u>	<u>Description</u>
	Object ID	unique ID for this object
	Property Label	name to be displayed for the property
	Property Data Type	indicates data type this property is stored as: boolean, character, date, integer, monetary, numeric, or timestamp
25	Property DB Name	unique name for the property to be used in the user relational database
	Display Order	order this property is displayed relative to others within its class
	Display Type	indicates data type this property is displayed as: boolean, character, date, integer, monetary, numeric, or timestamp
30	Display Length	space allocated to displaying this property
	Display Precision	number of digits for displaying this property

SQL commands for accessing relational structures corresponding to this property 102, such as the SQL commands 232, 233, and 261. In a preferred embodiment, the user 201 may override the "Property DB Name" generated by the system 200, but must still satisfy the name restrictions imposed by the relational database engine 240.

5

The properties 102 "Display Order", "Display Type", "Display Length", "Display Precision", "Visible Rows" and "Configuration Info" are merely default values for the property 102, and may be overridden by the user 201 for specific display configurations or searches.

10

The properties 102 "Number of DB Blocks", "Row Selectivity" and "Block Selectivity" are computed by the system 200. These properties 102 are used for improving the system's efficiency in searching tables using the relational database engine 220.

A class Property Group 306 includes one object for each type of searchable property 102, and each object of class Class Property 303 may have zero or more associated objects of class 101 Property Group 306. Each object of class Property Group 306 has a group name. The class Class Property 303 has a relationship 103 to the class Property Group 306 which links a group of properties into a single folder class 101.

20 Searchable Property Data Values

In the user's object database 100, a searchable property 102 of the class Class Property 306 may have a specific logical data type, such as integer or floating point. In the meta-model 220, a class Logical Datatype Definition 307 includes one object for each logical data type, and each object of class Class Property 303 is associated with no more than one object of class Logical 25 Datatype Definition 307.

In a preferred embodiment, each object of class Logical Datatype Definition 307 comprises information in table 3-7.

30

Table 3-7

<u>Property</u>	<u>Description</u>
Object ID	unique ID for this object

user 201 may desire that these derived classes 101 have distinct sets of enumerated values for their own serial numbers.

The class Enumerated Valid Value 308 has a first relationship 103 with the class
5 Class 301 and has a second relationship 103 with the class Class Property 303.

In a preferred embodiment, each object of class Range Valid Value 309 comprises information in table 3-9.

10

Table 3-9

<u>Property</u>	<u>Description</u>
Object ID	unique ID for this object
Minimum Value	minimum valid value
Maximum Value	maximum valid value
15 Default Value	default value if none specified
Cascade Flag	TRUE if valid lookup value is cascaded to derived classes

Similar to the property 102 "Cascade Flag" for the class Enumerated Valid Value 308, the property 102 "Cascade Flag" describes whether, when the object of class Range Valid
20 Value 309 is associated with a property 102 for a base class 101, whether the range of valid values are cascaded to the same property 102 for objects of derived classes 101 which are derived from that base class 101. For example, in the example user's object database 100 shown in figure 1, the user 201 may specify a searchable property 102 "Serial Number" for the class 101 component, and may specify a range of valid values for the class 101 component. Although this searchable property
25 102 "Serial Number" is inherited by each derived class 101 of the base class 101 component, such as the class analog component and the class 101 memory, the user 201 may desire that these derived classes 101 have distinct ranges of values for their own serial numbers.

The class Range Valid Value 309 has a first relationship 103 with the class Class
30 301 and has a second relationship 103 with the class Class Property 303.

Units of Measurement

The meta-model 220 comprises several additional classes 101 embodying objects for computation, class Class Property Function Operation 312, class Class Function Operation 313, class Custom Function Definition 314, class External Access Function Operation 315, and class Formula 316.

5

The class Unit Conversion Formula 311 has a first relationship 103 with the class Unit of Measurement 310 for a source unit of measurement, a second relationship 103 with the class Unit of Measurement 310 for a target unit of measurement, and a relationship 103 with the class Formula 316 for the conversion formula.

10

An object of class Formula 316 comprises an algebraic formula, and includes a formula name, an addend, a multiplier, an add/multiply rule (add, multiply, add then multiply, or multiply then add), and a formula description.

15

Objects of class Class Property Function Operation 312 and of class Class Function Operation 313 comprise information about functions to be performed in addition to, or in place of, an operation for the relational database 250, and includes an operation sequence (e.g., defined in terms of calls on the operating system), and a DBMS operation which the custom function adds to or substitutes for.

20

An object of class Custom Function Definition 314 comprises information about a custom function, and includes a function name, a version number, a function description, a flag to force execution of the custom function when an object of a class 101 related to the custom function is created, and a flag to override a custom function for a base class 101 when an object of a derived class 101 is created. A custom function adds or overrides a class member function, for a class 101 or an object in a class 101, and may be specified to override the class member function either before or after the class member function's ordinary operation.

25

An object of class External Access Function Operation 315 comprises information about a function for accessing an object which is external to the system 200, such as a file system object, an external database, or another object accessed by calls on the operating system.

30

In a preferred embodiment, the set of classes shown in figure 4 are predefined for the system 200. However, unlike the meta-model 220, these classes 101 are provided for convenience in modeling access control, and are not strictly required for modeling, translation, or searching the user's object database 100.

5

A class Root 401 is a base class 101 for all classes 101. In a preferred embodiment, the class Root 401 has only a few searchable properties which are generic to all objects in the system 200, such as a signature of the last creator or last modifier of the object, a timestamp, an is-private flag for indicating whether the object is private to a particular user 201, and a template identifier, if the object is a member of a class template. The class Root 401 is provided so that relationships 103 with the class Root 401 are inherited by all classes 101.

10

An object of class User 402 represents an individual user of the system 200, and includes information about the user, such as a user name, user password (possibly encoded for security), "super user" status, mailing address, telephone number, and accounting information such as who is responsible for user charges.

15

An object of class User Group 403 represents a group of users of the system 200, all having similar access control rights. User groups form a parent/child hierarchy (more precisely, a directed acyclic graph) like the parent/child relationship of classes 101. The class User Group 403 has a many-to-many relationship with itself using the cross-link class User Group to User Group 404, which represents the user group parent/child hierarchy.

20

The class User 402 and the class User Group 403 have a many-to-many relationship using the cross-link class User to User Group Link 405, which represents zero or more users' membership in zero or more user groups.

25

Access control is provided by two features. The first feature is ownership of a class property or an individual object, which ownership is by a user group or a user. (A user group may also own an entire class.) The second feature is edit permissions for a class or an individual object, which edit permissions are by a user group or a user.

30

by several many-to-one relationships 103, one each for files used by the operating system to implement the graphics object. Similarly, an object of class Binary Large Object 504 comprises a binary large object implemented by the operating system, and is associated with zero or more graphics objects.

5

The class Graphics 501 is also related to the class User 402 by a many-to-one relationship 103, in which a graphics object may be "checked out" or "checked in" (as a library book) by a user. When a graphics object is "checked out," no other user 201 of the system 200 is allowed to access that graphics object until it is "checked in" again. This allows the user 201 to
10 check out a graphics object, atomically update it, and check the graphics object back in, when it will again be available to other users 201.

An object of class Locale 505 comprises a logical location, such as a country. Zero or more locations may be related to a currency, represented by an object of class Unit of
15 Measurement 310, and to an object of class Timezone 506. An object of class Locale 505 includes a language identifier, a currency symbol and its placement, numeric formats (e.g., a digit separator, a date format, a time format, a radix point), and words for "false" and "true". Zero or more users may be associated with a single locale.

An object of class Information Text 507 comprises textual information about any object. The class Information Text 507 is related to the class Root 401 by a many-to-one relationship 103, in which textual information may be attached to any object. An object of class Information Text Type 508 comprises a type descriptor for textual information (e.g., "e-mail" or "memo"). The class Information Text Type 508 is related to the class Information Text 507 by a
20 many-to-one relationship 103.
25

The system 200 also provides a "note" which may be attached to each object. If the textual information to be associated with an object is short, e.g., just a few lines of text, the user 201 may simply add a "note" to the object, such as a short comment or reminder. This feature saves the user 201 having to create a searchable property 102 for notes to be associated with
30 the object.

At a step 610, the system determines if the user 201 chooses to build, edit or delete a class 101. If so, the system 200 proceeds to the step 612. Otherwise, the system 200 proceeds to the step 620.

5 At the step 612, the user 201 has chosen to build, edit or delete a class 101. If the user 201 chooses to build a new class 101, the system 200 proceeds to the step 614. If the user 201 chooses to edit an existing class 101, the system 200 proceeds to the step 616. If the user 201 chooses to delete an existing class 101, the system 200 proceeds to the step 618.

10 At the step 614, the system 200 creates a new object of class Class 301 in the meta-model 220. The system 200 provides a capability for the user 201 to select values for the properties 102 of the new object of class Class 301 which has just been created. For some of these properties, such as "Class DB Name", the system 200 generates a default value, but for others, it requires that the user 201 supply a value. The system 200 then returns to the step 610.

15 At the step 616, the user 201 selects an object of class Class 301 in the meta-model 220, and proceeds to edit that object. The system 200 receives editing commands and changes the values for the properties 102 of the object. The system 200 then returns to the step 610.

20 At the step 618, the user 201 selects an object of class Class 301 in the meta-model 220, and proceeds to delete that object. The system 200 removes the object from the meta-model 220, and implements any delete rules, such as deleting the objects of class Class Property 303 which relate to that object of class Class 301. The system then returns to the step 610.

25 At the step 620, the system determines if the user 201 chooses to build, edit or delete a class property 102. If so, the system 200 proceeds to the step 622. Otherwise, the system 200 proceeds to the step 630.

30 At the step 622, the user 201 has chosen to build, edit or delete a class property 102. If the user 201 chooses to build a new class property 102, the system 200 proceeds to the step 624. If the user 201 chooses to edit an existing class property 102, the system 200 proceeds to the step 626. If the user 201 chooses to delete an existing class property 102, the system 200 proceeds to the

At the step 634, the system 200 creates a new object of class Pointer Class Property 304 in the meta-model 220. The system 200 provides a capability for the user 201 to select values for the properties 102 of the new object of class Pointer Class Property 304 which has just been created. For some of these properties, such as "Pointer Class Property DB Name", the system 200 generates a default value, but for others, it requires that the user 201 supply a value. The system 200 then returns to the step 610.

At the step 636, the user 201 selects an object of class Pointer Class Property 304 in the meta-model 220, and proceeds to edit that object. The system 200 receives editing commands and changes the values for the properties 102 of the object. The system 200 then returns to the step 610.

At the step 638, the user 201 selects an object of class Pointer Class Property 304 in the meta-model 220, and proceeds to delete that object. The system 200 removes the object from the meta-model 220, and implements any delete rules. The system then returns to the step 610.

At the flow point 640, the user 201 does not desire to build, edit or delete any further objects in the meta-model 220, and the process is complete.

20

COMPILATION AND TRANSLATION PROCESS

Figure 7 shows a flow diagram of a process for compilation and translation between object-oriented and relational database structures.

At a flow point 700, the user 201 desires to translate the user's object database 100 into the corresponding relational database 203.

At a step 710, the user 201, having completed editing the user model 230, triggers the translation process.

At a step 750, the system 200 creates a column in the table for a value for a searchable property 102 for the class 101. If the searchable property 102 has a built-in datatype, the column holds the actual value for that built-in datatype. Otherwise, if the searchable property 102 has a user-defined datatype, the column holds the UID for the object corresponding to the value for that user-defined datatype.

At a step 760, the system 200 creates a column in the table for each relationship 103 between the class 101 and a related class 101. In the column for this relationship 103, the system 200 places the UID of the object in the related class 101 which is related to the object in the class 101 for this table. If the relationship 103 is many-to-one, the system creates multiple records in the table for the same object, each with the UID of a different object in the related class 101.

At a flow point 770, the compilation and translation process is complete.

SAMPLE TARGET RELATIONAL DATABASE

Figure 8 shows a data model diagram of a user relational database corresponding to the sample user's object database of figure 1.

As described with regard to figure 7, the user relational database 230 corresponding to the user's object database 100 comprises a set of relational tables 800, each corresponding to a class 101. Accordingly, in the example of figure 1, the system 200 creates a table 800 component, a table 800 analog component, a table 800 memory, a table 800 dynamic memory, a table 800 static memory, a table 800 manufacturer, a table 800 domestic manufacturer, and a table 800 foreign manufacturer. Each such table 800 comprises a set of columns 810 and a set of rows 820.

The system 200 creates, for each table 800, a column 810 "Object ID" for the UID of the object, and assures that objects added to each table 800 for derived classes 101 are also added to tables 800 for the base classes 101, with corresponding UIDs. For example, each row 820 added to the table 800 static memory corresponds to a row 820 added to the table 800 memory and corre-

In an example cascade search using the example user's object database 100 in figure 1, the system 200 would present the list of classes 101 available in the user database model 230.

5

At a step 912, the user 201 selects a class 101. The user interface 210 obtains a list of related classes 101 (i.e., classes 101 coupled to the selected class 101 by a relationship 103) in the user database model 230 from the meta-model 220, and their derived classes 101. The user interface 210 presents the list of related classes 101 and their derived classes 101 to the user 201 for selection.

10

In this example cascade search, the user could select the class 101 static memory. The class 101 static memory inherits all the relationships 103 of its parent class 101 memory and all the relationships 103 of its grandparent class 101 component, which includes a relationship 103 with the class 101 manufacturer.

15

At a step 913, the user 201 may select a related class 101 or a class 101 derived from a related class 101. So long as the user 201 continues to select related classes 101 or their derived classes 101, the system 200 continues with the step 912. When the user 201 declines to select any further related classes 101 or their derived classes 101, the system continues with the step 914.

20

In this example cascade search, the user 201 could select the class 101 foreign manufacturer, which is a class 101 derived from the related class 101 manufacturer.

25

At a step 914, for each class 101 selected by the user 201, the user interface 210 obtains a list of searchable properties (and any restrictions on their values) in the user database model 230 from the meta-model 220, and presents the list of searchable properties to the user 201 for selection.

30

At a step 920, the system 200 parses the cascade search request and builds the query model 260. To perform this step 920, the system 200 performs the steps 921 through 922 inclusive.

5 At a step 921, the system 200 builds a configuration object 991 for the initial class 101 selected by the user 201 to be searched. Each such configuration object 991 represents a single class 101 selected by the user 201, and comprises a first list of searchable properties 102 to be searched, a second list of searchable properties 102 to be displayed in the query result 251, and a third list of classes 101 starting with the initial class 101 selected by the user 201, and continuing with each related class 101 selected by the user 201.

 At a step 922, the system 200 builds a configuration object 991 for each additional class 101 selected by the user 201 to be searched, and links each such additional configuration object 991 to the configuration object 991 for the initial class 101 selected by the user 201 to be searched.

Building the SQL Query

 At a step 930, the system 200 builds the SQL query 261 in response to the query model 260. To perform this step 930, the system performs the steps 931 through 936 inclusive.

 At a step 931, the system 200 re-links the configuration object 991 into a list of query model objects 992. Each query model object 992 specifies a single search field or a single result field of the cascade search.

 At a step 932, the system 200 performs table alias analysis for the query model 260.

 To perform this step 932, the system 200 examines the list of query model objects 992 and determines if translation of the query model 260 into SQL commands 261 would otherwise cause any table to be joined with itself, e.g., if two or more different columns of the same table appear in the query model 260. If so, the System 200 generates a unique name for an Oracle "alias" for each instance of that table after the first, creates an alias record 993 for each such

acters), the comparison is represented in the SQL commands using the Oracle "LIKE" statement. If the text string to be compared is case-insensitive, the comparison is represented in the SQL commands using an Oracle statement for forcing case to upper case. Other string operations are converted to appropriate Oracle statements using a conversion table.

- o Comparison of a searchable property using a different unit of measurement, represented in the SQL commands using the appropriate conversion function for the source and target units of measurement, as recorded in the meta-model 220.
- o Multiple comparisons of multiple searchable properties, or other boolean operations on comparisons, represented in the SQL commands using boolean logical operators such as "AND", "OR", and "NOT".
- o Comparison of a searchable property with a group of numeric or text string values, or a range of numeric values, represented in the SQL commands using a plurality of comparisons of the same searchable property with different numeric or text string values.

In a preferred embodiment, when a cascade search relates to a searchable property 102 having a unit of measurement, the system 200 examines the units of measurement for the searchable property 102 and for the value it is being compared against, and if they are not the same, adjusts the SQL commands 261 to account for different units of measurement.

To make this adjustment, the system 200 examines the object of class Class Property 303 for the searchable property 102, and searches the meta-model 200 for the object of class Unit of Measurement 310 associated (as a storage unit of measurement) with that object of class Class Property 303. The system 200 then examines the query model 260, determines the unit of measurement for the cascade search, and searches the meta-model 200 for the object of class Unit of Measurement 310 associated with that unit of measurement. The system 200 then searches the meta-model 200 for the object of class Unit Conversion Formula 311 which converts the first unit of measurement to the second, and inserts a call to that unit conversion formula into the SQL commands 261.

Otherwise, where a column is indexed, the system attempts to write SQL commands to require the Oracle RDBMS to treat that column as indexed. When a function or arithmetic operation is applied to a column value, the Oracle RDBMS does not treat the column as being indexed. Accordingly, the system prefers to avoid these constructs. For example, "WHERE frequency = 3000" is preferred to "WHERE frequency/3 = 1000".

o Array Fetching. When large numbers of rows are to be selected from a table, the system attempts to fetch those rows into an array, for faster retrieval.

o Search Condition Ranking. When the system prefers a certain search condition order, for faster retrieval, it may alter the nature of the search conditions to place them in formats which cause the Oracle RDBMS to assign search priority in the order the system prefers.

o Table Name Sequence. In a FROM clause, the "driving" table, i.e., the table which is an intersection table, or the table with the smaller number of records if there is no intersection table, is placed at the end of a FROM clause. Other tables in the FROM clause are ordered similarly.

o Condition Predicate Sequence. In a WHERE clause, the "driving" condition predicate, i.e., the most efficient condition predicate that will return the fewest records, is placed at the beginning of a WHERE clause. Other condition predicates are ordered similarly.

o Booster Engines. In a WHERE clause, if the selected condition predicate would cause the Oracle RDBMS to perform a non-indexed search, a secondary condition predicate is added to first perform an indexed search and reduce the number of records to be searched.

For example, the SQL command "SELECT . . . FROM part WHERE UPPER(part.partnumber) = UPPER('DM54ALS114AJ')" would perform a non-indexed search because each part.partnumber would have to be converted to upper case. (This is simply a case-insensitive search on part.partnumber.) Instead, the system prefers the SQL command "SELECT . . . FROM part WHERE UPPER(part.partnumber) = UPPER('DM54ALS114AJ') AND (part.partnumber LIKE 'D%54%114%')", where all al-

Those skilled in the art will recognize, after perusal of this application, that other and further optimizations of SQL commands 261 generated by the system 200 are possible, that such other and further optimizations are within the scope and spirit of the invention, and that such other and further optimizations would not require either invention or undue experimentation.

At a step 936, the system 200 examines the query model 260, the list of query model objects 992, the alias records 993, the join records 994, and the condition records 995, and in response, generates SQL commands 261 using the form shown in table 9-3.

Table 9-3

```

"SELECT <result>    FROM <tables and aliases>
                    WHERE <JOIN of tables>
                    AND <conditions>"

```

The form in table 9-3 includes a <results> section for specifying the form of the query results 251, a <tables and aliases> section for specifying the tables in the relational database 250 to be searched, a <JOIN of tables> section for specifying how the tables to be searched are joined, and a <conditions> section for specifying additional conditions to be met by those records to be retrieved. There may also be additional SQL statements after the <conditions> section, such as a section for the SQL "GROUP BY", "ORDER BY" or other statements.

Information regarding the form of the query results 251 to be presented to the user 201 is inserted in the <result> section of the SQL commands 261. In a preferred embodiment, the information regarding the form of the query results 251 comprises a sequence of columns to be selected (using the SQL "SELECT" statement) from tables in the relational database 250. The sequence of columns to be selected comprises those columns requested by the user 201 when specifying the cascade search.

In this example cascade search, the system 200 would generate SQL commands 261 with a result section specifying the class 101 static memory and the searchable property 102

As noted with regard to figure 8, inheritance relationships are modeled by providing a column 810 "Object ID" in each table 800; when an object of a derived class 101 is created in the relational database 250, a row 820 is provided in both the base class 101 and the derived class 101, with the same object UID for that object for both tables 800. Thus, inheritance relationships are modeled in the SQL commands 261 by a JOIN statement relating to the identity of the two object UIDs, and by the parent/child relationship recorded in the meta-model 220.

In this example cascade search, the system 200 would generate SQL commands 261 with a condition section specifying the inheritance relationship between the class 101 static memory, its parent class 101 memory, and its grandparent class 101 component. The SQL commands 261 would thus continue with a statement such as "AND (static_memory.objectID = memory.objectID) AND (memory.objectID = component.objectID)". Similarly, the SQL commands 261 would also continue with a statement such as "AND (manufacturer.objectID = foreign_manufacturer.objectID).

In practice, because the user 201 has not made reference to any searchable properties 102 of the class 101 memory, there is no need to explicitly require use of the table 800 memory, and there is thus no need to require matching object UIDs in that table 800. The system 200 would thus omit the inheritance JOIN for this table.

As noted with regard to figure 8, data-model relationships 103 between source and target classes 101 are modeled by providing a column 810 in the source table 800 pointing to an object in the target table 800, i.e., having the object UID of a row 820 in the target table 800. Thus, data-model relationships 103 are also modeled in the SQL commands 261 by a JOIN statement relating to the identity of a pointer with an object UID, and by the data-model relationship recorded in the meta-model 220.

In this example cascade search, the system 200 would generate SQL commands 261 with a condition section specifying the data-model relationship 103 between the class 101 component and the class 101 manufacturer. The SQL commands 261 would thus continue with a statement such as "AND (component.manufacturerID = manufacturer.objectID)".

The results table 262 is preferably presented to the user 201 like a relational table, showing objects found by the cascade search and each searchable property 102 the user 201 selected for display.

5

In a preferred embodiment, the user interface 210 also provides the user 201 with the option to display objects found by the cascade search and their searchable properties 102 in a form for comparison, e.g., side by side in a spreadsheet format. In the comparison format, the user may view searchable properties 102 of the objects, edit searchable properties 102 for the objects, either individually or for multiple objects at once, and perform comparisons between objects, such as displaying those searchable properties 102 which differ from a selected object.

10

At a flow point 970, the cascade search is complete.

15 *Alternative Embodiments*

Although preferred embodiments are disclosed herein, many variations are possible which remain within the concept, scope, and spirit of the invention, and these variations would become clear to those skilled in the art after perusal of this application.

means for generating values for said keys for said records; and
means for causing said values for said keys for said records to correspond to said relationships between pairs of tables.

5 4. A system as in claim 1, wherein said means for inserting comprises means for maintaining said tables, keys for said tables, and said relationships between pairs of tables while inserting said set of records into said relational database.

10 5. A system, comprising
means for receiving a description of a user's object database, said user's object database having a set of classes and a set of relationships between pairs of said classes;
means for creating a model of said user's object database in response to said description, said model comprising an object database having

15 a first class of objects,
an object of said first class corresponding to each said one class in said user's object database,
a second class of objects, and
an object of said second class corresponding to each said one relationship in said user's object database; and

20 means for creating a relational database in response to said model, said relational database having a set of tables, keys for said tables, and relationships between pairs of said tables implementing said classes, objects and relationships of said user's object database.

25 6. A system as in claim 5, comprising
a relational database server, said server comprising means for accepting a set of relational database commands;
wherein said means for creating a relational database comprises means for generating a set of relational database commands.

30 7. A system as in claim 5, wherein said server comprises means for accepting a set of relational database commands from a second source of said commands.

12. A method for searching a database, said database having a plurality of classes, at least one searchable property associated with one of said classes, and at least one data-model relationship between a pair of said classes, said method, comprising the steps of

specifying a query model, said query model comprising a first class and at least
5 one searchable property associated with said first class, a second class related to said first class by a first said data-model relationship, and at least one searchable property for said second class;

translating said query model into a set of relational database commands;

applying said relational database commands to a relational database and retrieving
a query result in response thereto; and

10 displaying said query result.

13. A method as in claim 12,

wherein said relational database comprises a set of relational tables; and

wherein said step of translating comprises the steps of

15 identifying a first relational table associated with said first class and a second relational table associated with said second class;

first generating at least one database command to join said first relational table and said second relational table to produce a relational join, responsive to a data-model relationship between said first class and said second class;

20 identifying a first column associated with said first searchable property; and

second generating at least one database command to test records of said relational join in said column, responsive to a test for said searchable property.

14. A method as in claim 12,

25 wherein said relational database comprises a set of relational tables; and

wherein said step of translating comprises the steps of

identifying a first relational table associated with said first class and a second relational table associated with a base class of said first class;

30 first generating at least one database command to join said first relational table and said second relational table to produce a relational join, responsive to an inheritance relationship between said first class and said base class of said first class;

identifying a first column associated with said first searchable property; and

19. A method as in claim 16, wherein

said database comprises at least one searchable property associated with a first unit of measurement; and

5 said set of relational database commands comprise at least one comparison responsive to a conversion of said first unit of measurement to a second unit of measurement.

20. A method as in claim 16, wherein said step of generating is responsive to a

10 meta-model of said database, said meta-model comprising a first class of objects representative of classes of said database and a second class of objects representative of searchable properties of said database.

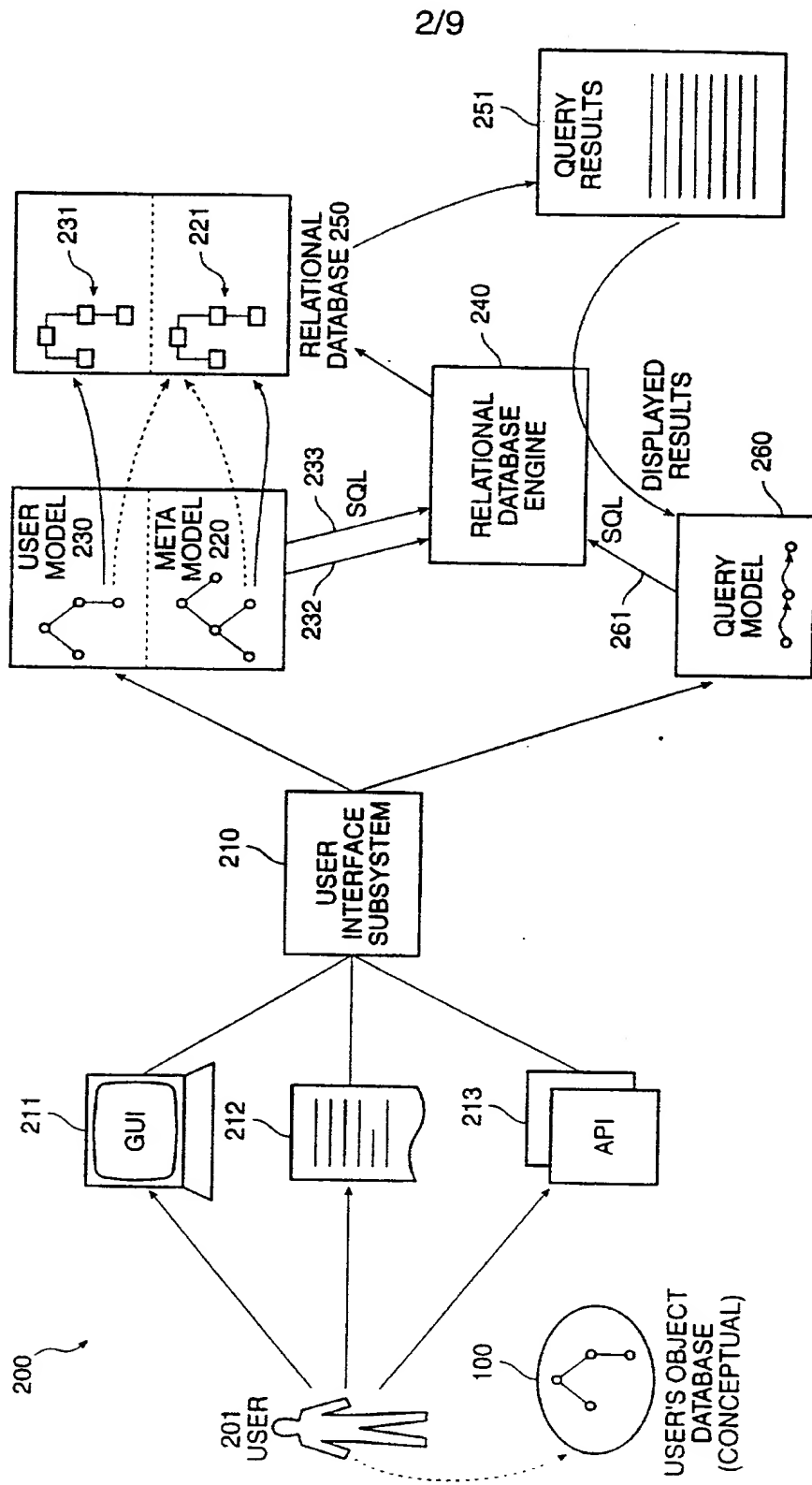


FIG. 2

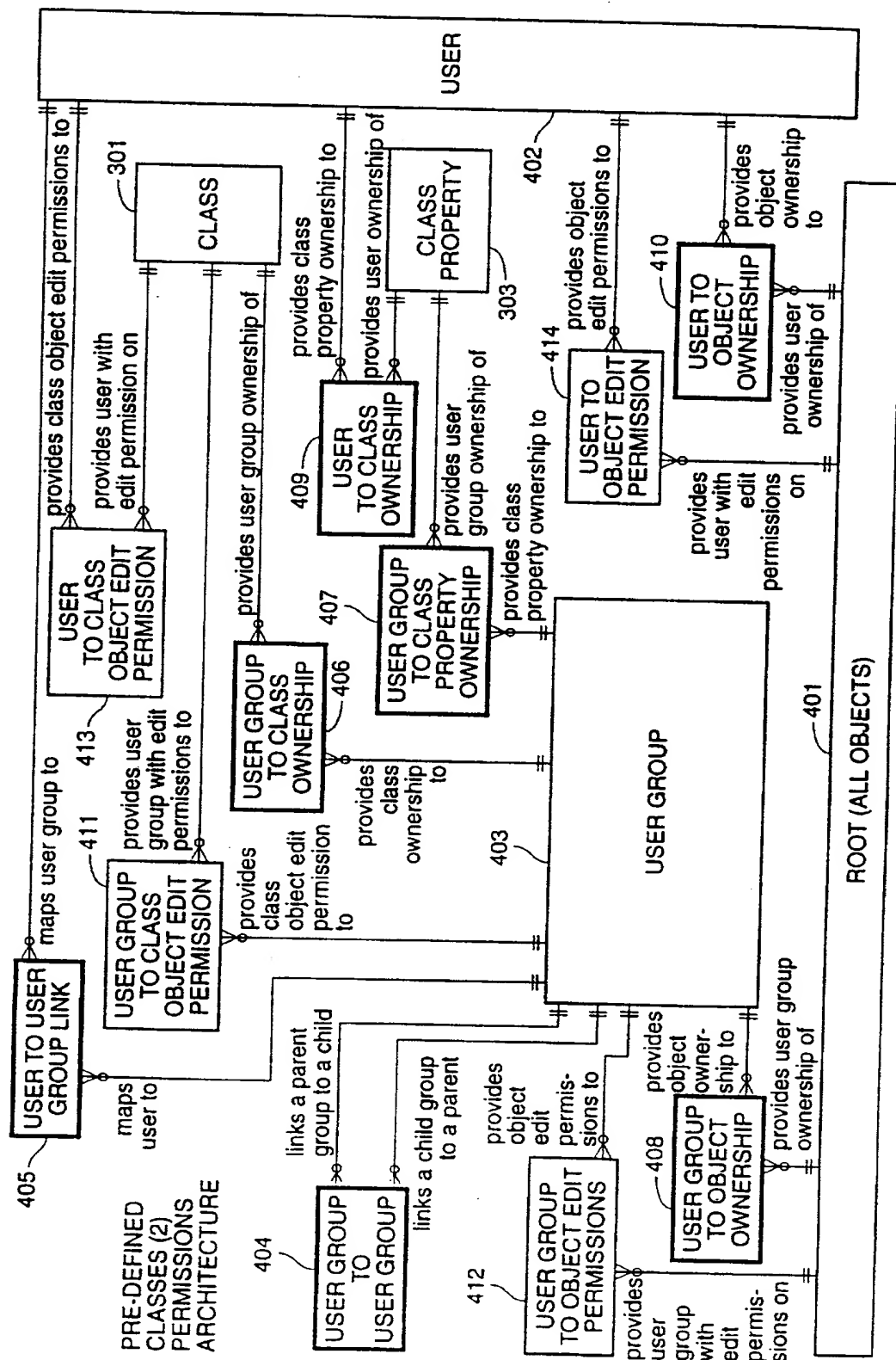


FIG. 4

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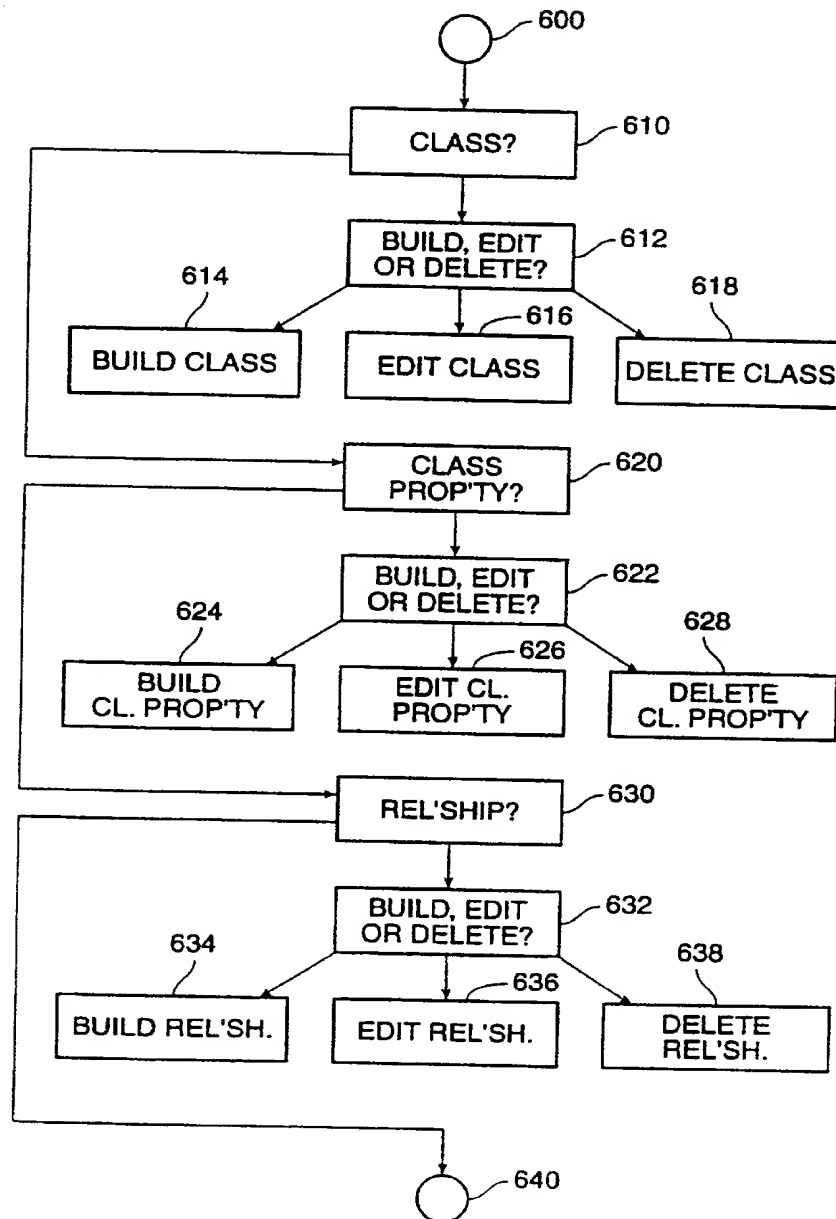


FIG. 6

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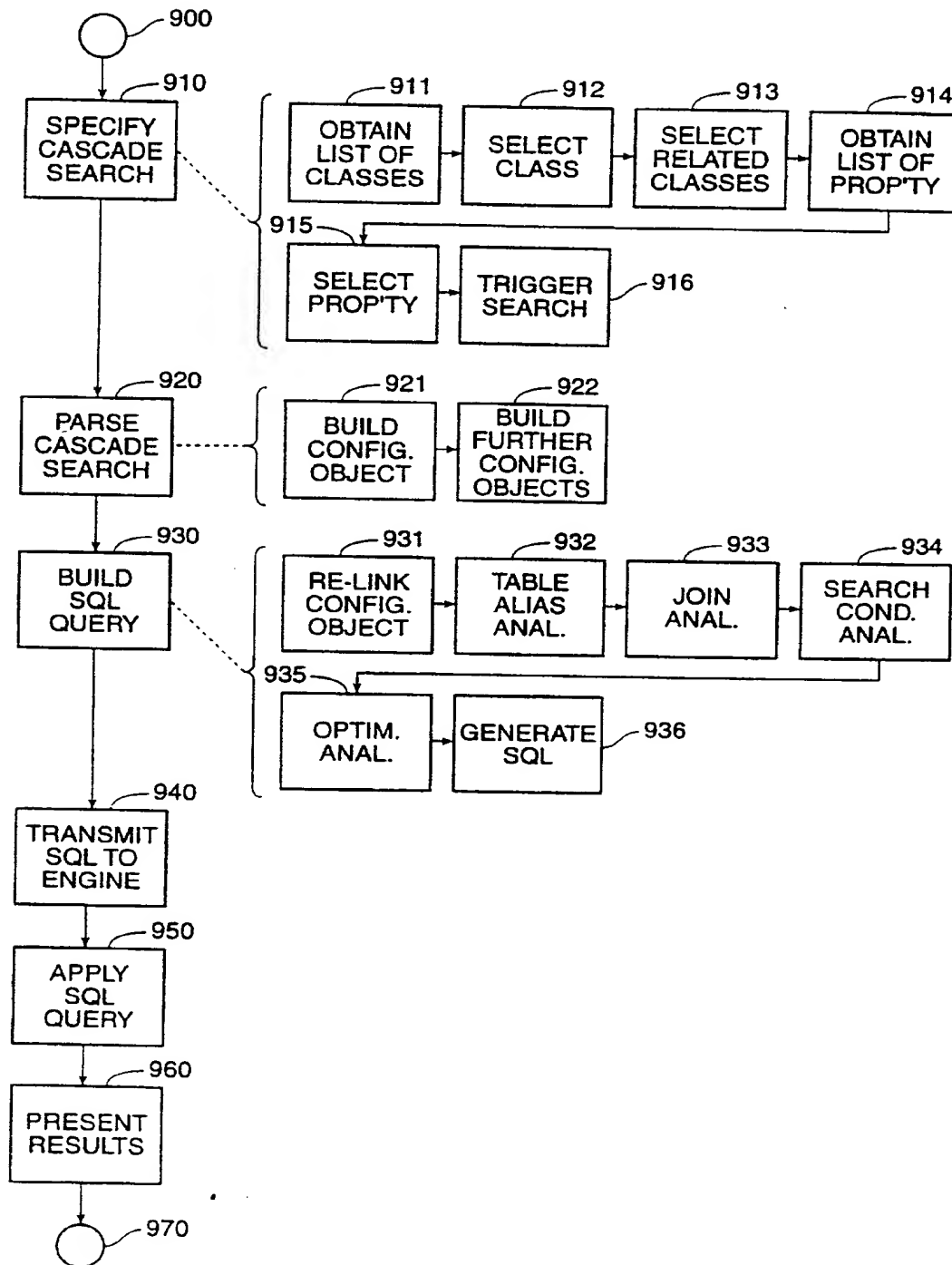


FIG. 9A

INTERNATIONAL SEARCH REPORT

International Application No
PCT/US 96/05678

A. CLASSIFICATION OF SUBJECT MATTER

IPC 6 G06F17/30

According to International Patent Classification (IPC) or to both national classification and IPC

B. FIELDS SEARCHED

Minimum documentation searched (classification system followed by classification symbols)

IPC 6 G06F

Documentation searched other than minimum documentation to the extent that such documents are included in the fields searched

Electronic data base consulted during the international search (name of data base and, where practical, search terms used)

C. DOCUMENTS CONSIDERED TO BE RELEVANT

Category *	Citation of document, with indication, where appropriate, of the relevant passages	Relevant to claim No.
P,X	WO,A,95 12172 (WALL DATA INC ;KROENKE DAVID M (US); OLDS CHRISTOPHER C (US); KAWA) 4 May 1995 see abstract; claims 1-36 ---	1,5,8, 10,12,16
A	WO,A,95 03586 (PERSISTENCE SOFTWARE INC) 2 February 1995 see page 3, line 7 - page 4, line 6 ---	1,5,8, 10,12,16
A	US,A,5 291 583 (BAPAT SUBODH) 1 March 1994 cited in the application see abstract see column 2, line 45 - column 3, line 62 ---	1,5,8, 10,12,16
A	US,A,5 295 256 (BAPAT SUBODH) 15 March 1994 cited in the application see column 2, line 52 - column 4, line 18 ---	1,5,8, 10,12,16
-/--		

☒ Further documents are listed in the continuation of box C.

☒ Patent family members are listed in annex.

* Special categories of cited documents :

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- *&* document member of the same patent family

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INTERNATIONAL SEARCH REPORT

Information on patent family members

International Application No

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Patent document cited in search report	Publication date	Patent family member(s)	Publication date
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WO-A-9503586	02-02-95	US-A- 5499371	12-03-96
US-A-5291583	01-03-94	NONE	
US-A-5295256	15-03-94	NONE	
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